

Research Summary

Effective Coordination with Towing Companies for Incident Response and Clearance

Tow truck operators are directly exposed to traffic when responding to incidents. Stalled vehicles can also hinder safety and operations on the highway and can create risk of secondary incidents. The objectives of this research study are to synthesize existing department of transportation (DOT) practices regarding coordination with towing companies and to identify potential collaboration and training opportunities that will improve towing worker safety as well as traffic safety by improving incident response and clearance.

The research methodology to meet this objective includes a literature review, survey, and coordination with the tow trucking industry, specifically the Missouri Tow Trucking Association (MTTA). Forty-four DOT survey responses were received, and follow-up interviews were conducted with four DOTs. Coordination with MTTA occurred through an informal focus group during a MTTA monthly meeting and a survey that was administered to MTTA membership.

Research findings indicate that training programs (26 responding DOTs) and coordination with the state towing association (23 responding DOTs) are the strategies most used by responding DOTs for partnering with the towing industry (see

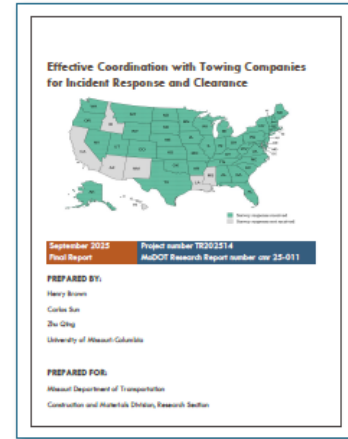


Figure 1). In addition, eight responding DOTs have implemented a Towing Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP) that provides incentive payments for towing companies to clear incidents within a specified timeframe. DOTs have found TRIPs to be beneficial in clearing incidents sooner. Eighteen responding DOTs indicated that their state has enacted laws and regulations related to towing.

"The research identified potential opportunities for MoDOT and the State of Missouri to enhance its coordination practices with MTTA."

Regarding coordination activities and training, meetings at regular intervals are the most used method for coordinating with the towing industry. Responding DOTs collaborate most often with law enforcement for towing response and recovery. Training is provided in various forms, such as traffic incident management (TIM) training and TRIP-specific training. The most perceived challenge to DOTs' efforts to effectively clear incidents using towing and recovery is the need for coordination among agencies.

Results from the 13 responses received for the MTTA survey indicate that MTTA respondents are most interested in partnering with MoDOT



on training programs and perceive safety of tow workers (nine respondents) as the greatest challenge to towing safety.

At the focus meeting, researchers obtained feedback from MTTA on issues directly related to MoDOT and issues that might not be influenced by MoDOT directly. Feedback received on issues directly related to MoDOT includes the need for closer communications with MoDOT concerning projects, various concerns with TRIPs, and interest in being better trained for TIM whether as individuals or part of TIM teams.

The research identified potential opportunities for MoDOT and the State of Missouri to enhance its coordination practices with MTTA, such as inviting MTTA during the planning process of major projects, exploring implementation of a TRIP in Missouri for the major metropolitan areas (i.e., Kansas City, St. Louis, Columbia, Springfield), enhancing TIM training opportunities for towers in Missouri, facilitating temporary traffic control training of towing operators, implementing regulations that improve the quality of operators (e.g., minimum requirements for operations, a base certification, vehicle inspection, and proper equipment for the type of work required), working with MoDOT and other TIM partners to strategize on how to best manage incidents involving electric vehicle fires, and cross training with tow companies (e.g., regular meetings).

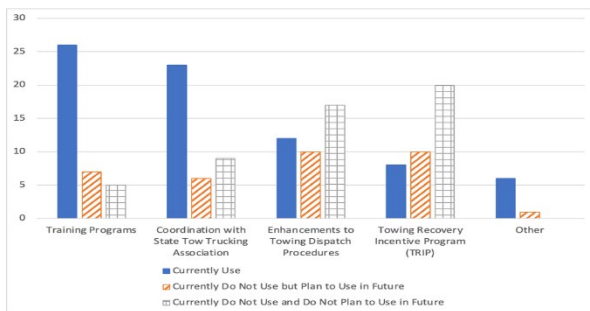


Figure 1: DOT use of strategies to coordinate with the towing industry.

Project Information

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